

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

RHODE ISLAND
STATE CRIME
LABORATORY

THINK BIG  WE DO

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY / FORENSIC SCIENCE PARTNERSHIP

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May 4, 2021

Representative Gregg M. Amore
Chairman, House Finance Subcommittee on Education

RE: Governor's FY 2022, FY 2021 Revised and Capital Budgets: State Crime Laboratory at URI

Chairman Amore and Subcommittee Members:

It is unfortunate that in-person testimony cannot be given to this subcommittee because of the restrictions placed on the State Assembly due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As the Director of the State Crime Laboratory, I am providing this written testimony for the subcommittee's consideration as there is an imminent need that this subcommittee should be aware of in considering an additional request of funding by the State Crime Laboratory.

The State Crime Laboratory, created by RIGL 12-1.2, serves the Rhode Island Criminal Justice community, and is funded through the budget of the University of Rhode Island.

The Laboratory's FY2021 budget of \$1.309M provides for salaries and benefits for 10 full-time employees and related expenses for consumables, equipment, and service contracts for high-end instrumentation. The FY2022 proposed budget, included in the Governor's FY2022 Capital Budget is sufficient to continue the operation of the Laboratory at its current level.

The purpose of this testimony is to bring attention to the need to add another Firearms examiner position to the Laboratory's staff. A review of firearms related submissions to the Laboratory from June 2019 to April 2021 indicates a spike in the number of requests the Laboratory has received between June of 2020 to April of 2021. A chart showing the number of submissions over this period is attached for your review.

At the last RI State Crime Laboratory Commission meeting a recommendation was made to hire another trained Firearms examiner to reduce the backlog which has increased from zero cases in April of 2020 to over 200 cases as of April 2021. The funding for this position is not included in the Laboratory's proposed FY2022 budget request.

There are several news stories, see references below, that report that increases in gun violence is a nationwide problem and Rhode Island is not exempt from this increase. Reports theorize that several national issues have led to an increase in gun sales, especially to first time gun buyers. The increase in gun sales is directly related to the increase in gun violence. Two major influencing factors cited in all reports is the COVID-19 Pandemic and the death of George Floyd.

The RI Police Chiefs Association was presented with this information at their last meeting and voted to support the hiring another Firearms examiner in the Laboratory. Funding for this position in the FY2022 is estimated to be \$115,000.

I would respectfully request that the House Finance Subcommittee on Education, consider recommending that funding for the position of a qualified Firearms examiner be added to the State Crime Laboratory's FY2022 budget request.

The hiring of this position would serve two purposes: first and foremost, to reduce the backlog of firearm examination cases within the Laboratory, and second to provide for succession planning within the firearms section of the Laboratory where both current examiners are expected to retire within the next 3 to 5 years.

I would like to thank this committee for their consideration of this request. The Laboratory's past experience in interacting with this committee and its Chair has been mutually beneficial in the past. I would welcome any questions that the committee members may have, and I would extend an invitation for each of you to visit the Laboratory.

Sincerely,

Dennis C. Hilliard

Digitally signed by Dennis C.
Hilliard
Date: 2021.05.05 13:46:54 -04'00'

Dennis C. Hilliard, M.S.
Director/Adj. Professor

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/compare-gun-violence-2021-n1265201>

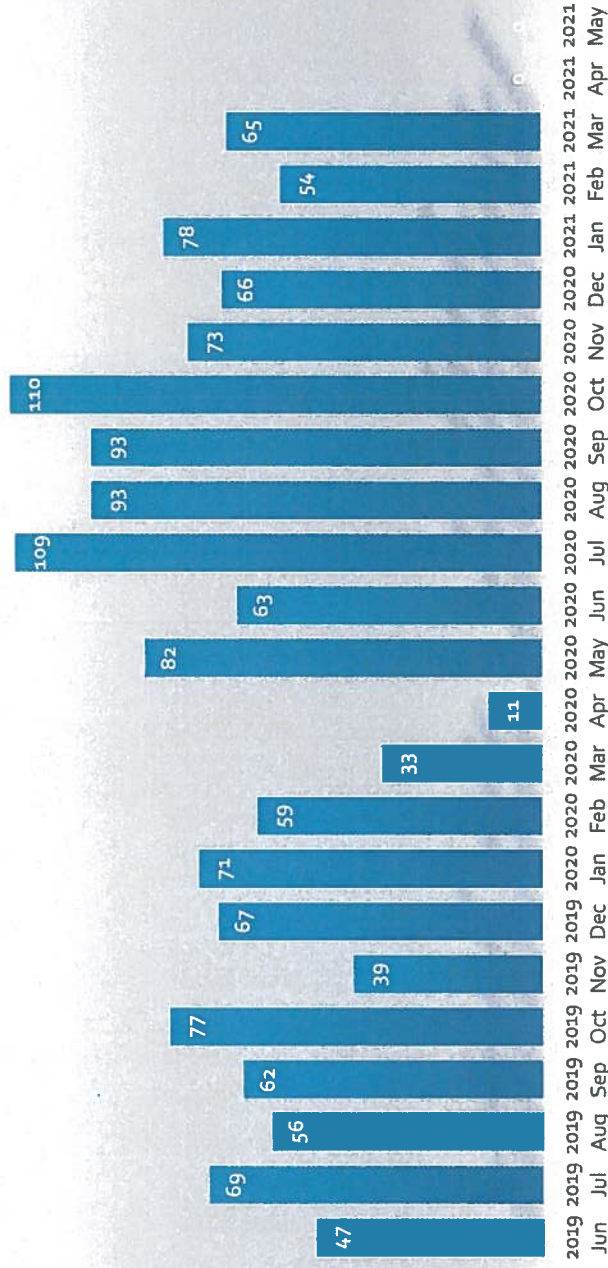
<https://www.ricagv.org/news/ri-2020-background-checks-on-track-to-dwarf-previous-years/>

<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/coronavirus/2020/10/02/gun-violence-on-rise-in-providence-and-nationwide-amid-pandemic/114207404/>

RISCL Submissions

Year/Month	Total Cases
2019 Jun	47
2019 Jul	69
2019 Aug	56
2019 Sep	62
2019 Oct	77
2019 Nov	39
2019 Dec	67
2020 Jan	71
2020 Feb	59
2020 Mar	33
2020 Apr	11
2020 May	82
2020 Jun	63
2020 Jul	109
2020 Aug	93
2020 Sep	93
2020 Oct	110
2020 Nov	73
2020 Dec	66
2021 Jan	78
2021 Feb	54
2021 Mar	65
2021 Apr	0
2021 May	0

FA/NBN/LP/TR CASES SUBMITTED



RISCL Submissions

Year/Month	FA + NBN Total Cases
2019 Jun	32
2019 Jul	39
2019 Aug	23
2019 Sep	39
2019 Oct	44
2019 Nov	16
2019 Dec	52
2020 Jan	45
2020 Feb	28
2020 Mar	13
2020 Apr	3
2020 May	64
2020 Jun	39
2020 Jul	69
2020 Aug	49
2020 Sep	69
2020 Oct	74
2020 Nov	43
2020 Dec	58
2021 Jan	61
2021 Feb	41
2021 Mar	50
2021 Apr	0
2021 May	0

FA + NBN CASES SUBMITTED

